

Love as a Contact Zone: Highland-Lowland Conflict and Negotiation in Three Philippine Cultural Texts

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Abstract

This paper analyzes three Philippine cultural texts that depict highland-lowland romantic relationships with the aim of discovering how romantic discourse is appropriated to investigate the conflict and negotiation of culture. The texts examined are the short story “The Girl from Bauko” (Ablang 1988), the TV series *Forevermore* aired in 2014-2015 by a local Philippine TV station, and the 2006 film *Don't Give Up on Us*. All three texts depict the blossoming romance between an Igorot, who is a member from an indigenous minority group, and a lowlander, whose collective ethnic identity is culturally dominant. To address these issues, this paper employs the concept of the “contact zone,” which is conceptualized here as a space where confrontation, exchange or kinship occurs or is developed. This paper argues that highland-lowland romantic relationships as depicted in the three narratives implicate and engage a range of issues such as the metropolis/periphery dichotomy, the romanticization of the highlander, and the prevalent socio-economic and ethnic divides.

Keywords: representation, Igorot, ethnicity, class struggle, contact zone

In popular media in the Philippines, romantic relationships between individuals belonging to major ethnolinguistic and cultural minority groups, otherwise known as indigenous peoples, are often depicted as fraught with tensions due to ethnic and socio-economic differences. This is because of the historical process that the formation of the Filipino as a people and the Philippines as a nation have undergone. The perceived differences between the lowlanders who submitted to Spanish colonial rule and the highlanders who did not was first perpetuated by Spanish colonizers who were frustrated with highlander recalcitrance and were further strengthened by succeeding American colonizers who found Filipino lowlanders too hispanized (see Scott¹). Nevertheless, these perceived differences were subsequently retained and even instituted in Philippine law, particularly in the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 or the Republic Act No. 8371 of the Philippines. This law summarily distinguishes indigenous peoples from other ethnolinguistic groups of the Philippines as communities or groups of people who have become “historically differentiated from other Filipinos” because they have resisted colonization or influences of other cultures. One such identified indigenous group is the Igorot² who, in terms of administrative, geographic and educational simplification, is identified with the highlands, specifically the Cordillera Administrative Region situated in Luzon, the largest island of the Philippines. While it can be argued that such historical differences have become less prominent with the inroads made by education,

globalization, mobilization, mass media and technological advancement, the continued existence of the law and the use of differing collective identities as the grounds for conflict in the formation and/or continuation of romantic relationships between Filipino characters in fictional narratives appears to counter this argument. In this paper, I analyze three narratives with the common theme of romance between an Igorot/highlander and a lowlander (originating from the lowlands of the Philippines and belonging to a major Philippine ethnolinguistic group) in three different production forms, namely the short story “The Girl from Bauko,” the feature film *Don’t Give Up on Us* and the television series *Forevermore*, through the lens of the contact zone. I do this in order to investigate how conflict and the negotiation of culture are appropriated in romantic discourse within the Philippine context.

Defined as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination,” the term “contact zone” was coined by Mary Louise Pratt and based on the linguistic concept of “contact language” (1992, 4). Contact languages are improvised languages formed to allow speakers of different languages to communicate effectively. According to Pratt, “such languages are commonly regarded as chaotic, barbarous, lacking in structure” (1992, 6), similar to her notion of the contact zone, where the contact between two cultures can result in chaos and conflict, or in other words, in culture clash.

Pratt first introduced the concept of the contact zone in “Arts of the Contact Zone” in which she questioned the assumption of a “unified and homogenous social world” (1991, 6). Pratt also employed this concept in her analysis of travel writing from the 1700s to the 1900s, critiquing how meaning-making and representations of non-European subjects of the period were influenced by Eurocentrism and imperialism. Pratt’s focus is on the dominance of the powerful and the acts of resistance by the subjugated. Joseph Harris, in his 1995 paper “Negotiating the Contact Zone,” argues that Pratt’s definition is limiting by its preference for, even romanticization of, confrontation and dissent. Focusing on differences, conflict, and struggle alone, Harris observes, only engenders inflexible stances where people in the contact zone fail to effectively interact. Instead, Harris proposes that the contact zone be viewed as a site that not only allows for the articulation of differences but also for negotiation where such differences can be brought into “useful relation with each other” (1994, 35). Similarly, Richard Miller, in his article “Fault Lines in the Contact Zone,” recommends that the contact zone can be a powerful space for addressing discriminatory views and beliefs (“racist, sexist, homophobic”) as long as it does not simply silence such views but instead allows for dialogue, enabling an on-going process of transformation and self-reflexivity (1994, 407). However, Miller cautions against wholesale transformation, as such a turnabout could be the outcome of a compliance with the dominant perspective because its proponents are more powerful, without a change in perspective or belief.

Taking my cue from these three perspectives – Pratt, Miller and Harris – my use of the concept of contact zone in this paper refers to any space or event where cultures come into contact with each other leading to one of three levels of engagement: 1) confrontation, where asymmetrical power relations and conflict between the cultures are maintained; 2) exchange, where there is a seeming transfer of values and beliefs, but no developing dialogue between two cultures; and 3) kinship, where the relationship between two cultures allows for an ongoing process of negotiation and transformation. I argue that romantic relationships as depicted in media forms can be viewed as sites of the contact zone, particularly if they depict love between two different cultures. The indigenous highland and colonized lowland cultures of the Philippines are such examples, which are historically and even legally represented as disparate cultures. Romantic love becomes a site where such cultures are brought into contact with each other, and where questions of domination and subjugation abound. Thus, this paper proceeds with two assumptions: 1) love is not a blank, unifying space: it is a complex, subjective, value-laden space where people who enter it also bring with them their own cultures; and 2) love as a contact zone is a space where confrontation and engagement between cultures occurs.

This is of course not a definitive study, given the limited sources analyzed. While there are many issues that can be inferred from the depiction of the Igorot in the characters of the three works studied, this paper only focuses on the representations of highland and lowland characters in connection to how these affect the development of romantic relationships between characters, and the ideological function these relationships might serve. As Gitlin observes in his analysis of television shows in the United States, “commercial culture does not *manufacture* ideology; it *relays* and *reproduces* and *processes* and *packages* and *focuses* ideology that is constantly arising both from social elites and from active social groups and movements throughout society” (2000, 576, emphasis in original). In other words, as commercial cultural productions, short stories, films, and television shows invariably function as carriers of ideologies, albeit packaged in specific ways to target their intended audience.

Ethnic Divide in “The Girl from Bauko”

The short story “The Girl from Bauko” is written by Yolanda Ablang, an Ilokano writer, and was first published in 1988 in the anthology *Ilocano Harvest: A Collection of Short Stories by Contemporary Writers*. In the story, the lowlander male protagonist (specifically of Ilokano ethnicity), tries to woo the eponymous girl from Bauko,

a place geographically located in the region of Cordillera. The girl initially responds to the advances of the lowlander by identifying their geographic origins as an insurmountable obstacle to a romantic relationship:

“You’re a lowlander,” she said. “I hail from a land above the clouds some five thousand feet above sea level; how could that be possible? Shall I stoop so easily like a giant from the sky to love a man from a civilized world? I’m of Igorot stock, looked down upon by you lowlanders.” (Ablang 1988, 4)

In comparing herself to a giant in opposition to the man who is from a “civilized world,” the girl alludes to the negative traits often associated with giants in Igorot folklore where they are often depicted as uncommonly tall beings who are exceptionally gluttonous to the point of being cannibalistic.³ On the other hand, the girl describes the man as belonging to the “civilized world,” which she further clarifies is different from her own “world”:

She sighed heavily. “No, we can never meet. Shall we take seriously Mark Twain’s⁴ line that East is East and West is West and the twain can never meet?” [...] “You simply forget that we come from two separate worlds, two different spheres.” (Ablang 4)

In quoting the first line of Rudyard Kipling’s “The Ballad of East and West,” the division between the lowlander and the highlander is compared to nineteenth-century colonial discourses of difference between the Occidental and the Oriental, which allows the Occident to legitimize its domination over the Orient (Said). Thus, what starts as a geographic difference between highlander and lowlander becomes a discourse on ethnic division. The man sustains this kind of discourse for although he objects to the girl’s reason for refusing his proposal, he admits that the ethnic boundary between him and the girl is an adversity that must be surpassed. On the other hand, failure to obtain the girl’s love is also a challenge to his “pride, courage and honor,” which indicates that a successful relationship between the two fulfills his image of himself as someone brave (Ablang 5), thus implicating the discourse of lowland superiority. The superiority of the man over the other is further sustained in the way he finally “wins” the girl, who challenges him to a foot race which is a “priceless tradition of honor”: if the suitor “defeats a girl in a selected competition, then she is conquered” (Ablang 5). The man wins the race, and his victory is described using metaphors that sustain lowland superiority. For instance, the girl is compared to a “frightened deer” while the man is compared to a “jet hitting fist-sized boulders with lightning ferocity” (Ablang 5-6), associating the lowlander with superior mechanical technology over the highlander who is associated with base nature. The girl is described as “no match for this lowlander,” and her declaration of

surrender (“I surrender to you... Of course the jig is up and I am yours”) explicitly employs a discourse of conquest (Ablang 6). This discourse is sustained by the diction, wherein specific words of “victor” and “vanquished” are used to describe the lowlander and the highlander, respectively.

In the end, however, the man returns to his lowland home, and the girl is left in Bauko. What remains is only a romantic story that the man later tells his children, which leaves a lasting impression on the narrator: “Of all stories – love stories – worth remembering my Father told me, not one can surpass the poignant story of a ravishing and winsome Mountain lass by the name of Maila” (Ablang 1). “The Girl from Bauko,” narrated by the child whose father is, presumably the man in the story, is thus colored by a lowlander perspective, one that happily sustains lowlander-highlander difference for dramatic effect. Thus, the greatest conflict between the central characters is the differences between their cultures, heightened and sustained so that the level of engagement between the two lovers remains confrontational, where the struggle for cultural superiority remains at the forefront of their interactions. Their romance is a site where perceived disparate highland and lowland cultures are made to contend with each other. While there is an attempt to engage in dialogue and negotiation, it is unsuccessful, as the man only succeeds in wooing the girl in a show of strength and (lowland) superiority. In effect, the story portrays a contact zone where differences remain highlighted, even romanticized, leading to a love story that is doomed at the start and a status quo that remains unchanged: the girl from Bauko remains in her mountain home, a romantic representation of the seemingly unattainable highlander, and her lover returns to his home in the lowlands, sharing his memories of having once “conquered” a beautiful highlander.

Negotiating the Concept of Success in *Don't Give Up on Us*

The romanticization of cultural difference that informs Ablang’s short story is reproduced in the 2006 Filipino film *Don't Give Up on Us* directed by Joyce Bernal, starring popular Filipino actors Judy Ann Santos as the character Abby, a career-driven woman from Manila, and Piolo Pascual as the character Vince, a singer from Baguio City. Embodying explicit representations of a perceived lowland-highland difference, Abby and Vince clash ideologically as they travel around the Cordillera highland region in pursuit of Abby’s best friend who has run away from her impending marriage with Abby’s brother to be with a man that Abby does not approve of. Abby is portrayed as an aggressive, short-tempered woman who is willing to do anything to get what she wants. Compared to her, Vince is laidback and unmotivated. In an early scene of the film, Abby is horrified when she learns that Vince seems to care very little about his future, contented as he is with earning a meager income as a

singer. Vince invokes the difference between Cordillera and Manila, explaining that everything in the highlands is cheap and one can just ask for food from the neighbour's garden. Moreover, still invoking highland-lowland difference, Vince, in the same scene, explains to Abby that, "Actually *dito, basta may trabaho ka, basta masaya ka, basta hindi nagugutom okay na iyon*" (Actually here, as long as you have a job, as long as you're happy, as long as you don't go hungry, then all is okay). In other words, Vince is implying that the people of the highlands care little for upward mobility as long as they can feed their families while doing what makes them happy. Abby and Vince also clash in the different values they place on time. In Abby's "world," the value of time is measured in terms of the number of achievements completed within a particular period. For Vince, time is immaterial as long as one is with the person one loves. This difference in valuing time is most apparent in three scenes: first, when Vince asks Abby to give him her watch because she continuously checks the time and it distracts him; second, when Abby forces Vince to tell her what he wants as she has meetings and Vince responds by asking if she loves him as he loves her; and third, when Abby's father returns the watch that Vince took from her. The act of returning the watch is a metaphor for Vince's acknowledgment that Abby is truly back in "her world" where time is of great importance. Despite these differences, Vince and Abby fall in love and form a sexual relationship. When Abby returns to Manila, she however distances herself from Vince, and both acknowledge that simply loving each other is not enough as their different beliefs and social circumstances will eventually make the other unhappy.

Unlike "The Girl from Bauko," which employs discourses of race and physical characteristics to articulate lowland-highland differences, *Don't Give Up on Us* explores how difference can be grounded in incompatible ideals borne of the characters' differing social and economic backgrounds. Vince, in repeatedly invoking the phrase "*dito sa amin*" (here in our place) and as a representative of the highlander, defines the people of the Cordillera highlands as idyllic and content. Juxtaposed against Abby's general characterization and negative reaction to his attitude however, Vince and those he represents can be interpreted as indolent and unmotivated. Furthermore, when Abby tells her best friend after she finally finds her that she cannot live in the highlands⁵ because she is not used to the life there, the film reiterates that the highland is far too simple and poor for a lowland or citified woman. Abby's declaration⁶ to her friend that she's too *maarte*, meaning "sophisticated" at best, or "fussy and particular" at worst, exemplifies this stance. These iterations of difference point to the association of the lowland and highland with the concepts of metropolis/center and periphery/margins. Abby and her best friend are lowlanders belonging to the metropolis, which is associated with comfort, technological advancement and progress, in contrast to the highland, which is relegated to the periphery as it is viewed as being underdeveloped. These incompatible ideals and beliefs cause a rift between the characters. At the film's climax,

Abby returns to Baguio to apologize to Vince and to declare her love for him, and to suggest that he could enter her world (“*Paano kung ikaw ang pumasok sa mundo ko?*”) by moving to Manila. However, Vince is ambivalent as he does not believe that he could survive in the metropolis. At the end of the film, both main characters do get married, but only after a time of separation where Abby quits her job and spends time abroad while Vince decides to leave Baguio City after all and go to Manila to join a music recording company where he is able to record a solo album. When Abby and Vince meet again, Vince has already found success in the metropolis, and Abby is no longer tied to her meticulous plans for the future. Examined through the lens of the contact zone, the same conflicting lowland-highland ideals continue to influence the main characters, even if each has adopted the other’s beliefs to a certain measure. In comparison to “The Girl from Bauko,” therefore, *Don’t Give Up on Us* allows for greater negotiation between the two characters; their romance continues only after they have each detached from their values (simple contentment for Vince and uncompromising success for Abby) and learnt to see and practice the values of the other. Their love thus becomes a contact zone where differences are not merely highlighted and brought into conflict with each other but are also brought into dialogue. However, the role-reversal of the two characters by the end of the film depicts a mere exchange of ideals and beliefs, where the characters’ wholesale transformation is questionable as there seems to be no real compromise achieved. Borrowing from the metaphor of contact languages, Vince and Abby might have adopted the other’s language, but they have not truly developed a creole language that merges them.

Culture and Social Class in *Forevermore*

Forevermore is a Philippine television series or *teleserye* (a play on television and series which is closely related to the *telenovela* genre from Latin America) directed by Cathy Garcia Molina. It aired in one of the major network stations of the Philippines from 2014 to 2015 and had 148 episodes divided into two seasons. The series was also aired in other countries like Kenya and Malaysia. The basic premise of the story centers on two contending characters from different cultures, represented by Xander and Agnes, and how they overcome their differences to develop and sustain a romantic relationship. The initial conflict between Xander and Agnes lies in the difference in their values, which is implied to be a result of their different class status and social upbringing. Xander comes from an *alta sosyal*⁷ family who owns a chain of hotels. Because of his parents’ neglect, high expectations, and a past family tragedy, Xander resorts to behaving recklessly, often affecting people around him negatively. His first encounter with Agnes is a result of such foolhardiness, when he decides to base jump from the peak of Sto. Tomas, the highest mountain range within the vicinity of Baguio City, only to crash on the truck bed of Agnes’s father’s

truck bed. Xander accidentally destroys baskets of strawberries which Agnes and her father are on their way to sell to pay off their debt to the owner of the land that they live on. Because they lose their means to pay their debt, Agnes and the people in her small community, a fictional place called La Presa, decide to keep Xander captive until he can pay them back. Unfortunately, Xander is unable to do so, and Agnes resorts to begging his father to help them. His father agrees on the condition that Xander returns to La Presa to learn the ways of the people there.

Viewed through the highland-lowland lens, the lowlander Xander and his family are depicted as broken and cold; more concerned with the success of their hotel business than each other's well-being. In comparison, Agnes and her highland community are warm and tightly knit, supporting each other through adversity such as impending debt and eviction from the land that is the source of their livelihood. As a series, *Forevermore* attributes the breakdown of family values in a lowlander family to their economic progress and success, values that are otherwise retained in the poor highland community. Jeffrey Jeturian, an award-winning Filipino director, once commented in an interview that Filipino films tend to use poverty for romantic and melodramatic effect (Lim 281, 300). This is also evident in *Forevermore*, where La Presa, as a representation of a poor highland community, is depicted as inhabited by happy, peaceful, and hardworking people. Its backdrop of untouched mountains and sprawling farmlands further heightens the idealization and simplification of poverty. Thus, the series correlates highland life with the ideal, communal, albeit poor, life, while lowland life is depicted as individualistic and, if not rich as embodied by Xander and his family, is then embodied by the lazy (people who simply wait for remittances from relatives or friends from abroad) or the opportunistic.

The romantic relationship between Xander and Agnes develops only after Xander adapts to the lifeways of the La Presa community. It is only after he is accepted as a member of the community that he and Agnes are encouraged to acknowledge their developing feelings for each other. Within the highland community of La Presa, these romantic feelings are easily accepted and supported. The same is not the case with Xander's lowland family and acquaintances, who question their relationship on the grounds of their different socio-economic status. For instance, in the first season of *Forevermore*, Xander's mother tries her best to separate the lovers by insisting that Agnes "does not belong in their world," particularly in comparison to Xander's previous girlfriend whom she describes as "educated, modern, experienced" and again, belonging in the same world⁸ that Xander and his family inhabit. Xander's mother also feels resentment towards the La Presa community as a whole, particularly since Xander chooses to spend his time with the La Presans even after his mandated stay with them ends. In one episode, Xander's mother rebukes her son for prioritizing the La Presans and their needs over any promises that he might make to his mother.⁹ Finally, Xander's matriarchal grandmother also feels ambivalent towards Agnes,

reiterating the image that she does not belong in their socio-economic world. Because of their treatment towards Agnes, Xander decides to leave his family to live with the La Presans instead. While his father respects his decision, his grandmother and mother shun him, and it is only with the arrival of a threat¹⁰ to both their business and the La Presans' livelihood that they finally feel positively towards Agnes and her relationship with Xander. At the end of season one, Xander leaves Agnes after all, as he feels powerless towards the coercive tactics of his ex-girlfriend's father, who threatens to hurt the people he values if Xander refuses to turn his attention to his ex-girlfriend instead. In season two, Agnes recovers from the heartache caused by Xander's leaving, and the rest of the season deals with how they try to resolve their issues and reunite. The show ends with Agnes deciding to leave for Japan to continue her studies and Xander promising to wait for her.

It is quite clear that if reimagined as a contact zone, the romantic development and resolution of Xander and Agnes' relationship also plays on highland-lowland distinctions and differences. Compared to "The Girl from Bauko" and *Don't Give Up on Us*, however, the depiction of the relationship of the central characters in *Forevermore* allows for greater negotiation and dialogue, where their cultural and class differences are resolved, accepted or mediated and enables their progressive transformation as individuals and lovers. Like *Don't Give Up on Us*, *Forevermore* also plays on the metropolis/periphery dichotomy where the lowland is associated with the metropolis and the highland with the periphery. In season one, the title's opening scene shows in the background the mountainous ranges of Sto. Tomas where the fictional La Presa is located. In season two, the background is the skyline view of Metro Manila. Season one is primarily set in the Cordillera region, specifically Benguet, while season two is primarily set in Metro Manila, where Agnes is studying. Unlike *Don't Give Up on Us*, *Forevermore* does not simply employ this dichotomy to heighten the cultural and social difference between Agnes and Xander. Instead, the metropolis/periphery dichotomy serves as the setting that parallels the increasing complexity of the romance between Agnes and Xander. By directly contrasting the images of metropolis/lowland and periphery/highland, *Forevermore* acknowledges that such dichotomies exist, but brings them into dialogue through the romantic relationship between Agnes and Xander, and resolves them by depicting love as a site where the ongoing process of negotiation between differing values and beliefs such as class and culture is needed for positive transformations and enduring relationships.

Conclusion: Love as a Contact Zone

The three texts analyzed in this paper all employ the highland-lowland dichotomy as one of the primary reasons that hinders the development of romantic relationships between characters of different cultures. Analyzing these

romantic relationships as contact zones exposes the hierarchical arrangements that inform perceived cultural differences and how they are dealt with. In the first instance, highly asymmetrical relations of power may continue to exist implicitly as texts which explicitly problematize difference and inequality only do so for dramatic and romantic effect. In “The Girl from Bauko,” for example, it is noteworthy that despite the explicit divide between the girl and the man, the girl’s protestations of difference are easily silenced by the man’s display of superior physical strength. Additionally, the perspective in which the story is written fails to give the girl a true voice; the narrative is from the perspective of the man’s child who is retelling the story told to her by her father. From this perspective, the girl is represented through the eyes of the dominant community, and the conflict between their cultural differences remains irreconcilable. Because of this, the girl as a highlander is reduced to a romanticized image of the exotic creature and the depiction of the love between highlander and lowlander remains at the level of confrontation where the conquest of the minority is inevitable.

Conceptualizing love as a contact zone also allows us to re-examine the apparent negotiation and mutual acceptance of conflicting cultures. In *Don’t Give Up on Us*, the choices that Abby and Vince make which lead to their role-reversal and the eventual resumption of their romantic relationship calls into question the notion that they have truly addressed their differences. While the depiction of their growing love allows for the exchange and reception of the other, it is an engagement in which unresolved differences are glossed over. The suppression of the cultural differences between the two characters may be partly due to the limited length of a film and audience expectations of a happy resolution, culminating in their legal union. However, it also creates the assumption that such differences are negligible. In comparison, the love depicted in *Forevermore* is one of an ongoing process that continually calls for the characters’ accommodation and willingness to adjust their views and beliefs to sustain their relationship. Perhaps the platform (*Forevermore*, after all, is composed of 142 episodes with a viewing time of at least 24 minutes each episode) contributes greatly to the development of dialogue and negotiation between the characters. Nevertheless, by the end of the series, both Agnes and Xander have developed a kinship with each other where they have each transformed to accommodate each other’s beliefs and ideals but continue to hold on their identity.

The contact zone, as employed here, exposes representations of love between individuals of different cultures as invariably influenced by lowland-highland perceptions of the other, the metropolis/periphery dichotomy, and socio-economic and ethnic divides. More importantly, however, the contact zone proves to be a site not only of conflict and resistance, although this is a valuable component of the concept, but also as a site of exchange and negotiation. As such, it may be employed in further analyses of romantic relationships (as well as other forms of relationships) between multicultural Filipinos to explore whether such depictions only play on

confrontation, allow for exchange of ideals and beliefs, or more successfully, advance the possibility of kinship through the use of continuous negotiation and positive transformation.

Notes

¹ In his monograph, “The Igorot Struggle for Independence,” first published in 1971, distinguished Philippine historian William Henry Scott expresses his admiration for the Igorot for their successful evasion of Spanish rule for three hundred years. However, Scott says, this led to the Spaniards disseminating the propaganda that the Igorots refused to give up their freedom and be “civilized” because they were hopeless savages compared to their fellow Indios. This image of the Igorot became a stereotype, and as Spanish influence on the indigenous cultures of Cordilleran tribes was very minimal, other stereotypes – illiterate, backward, violent, dog-eater, head-hunter, different – arose through the years. For Scott, this is lamentable, for even the teaching of history perpetuates these stereotypes:

It was a heavy price to pay for liberty. And it is a price not yet fully paid. For even their descendants who are congressmen, professors or bishops must send their children to government schools where they dutifully stare at textbooks which say they are different from all other Filipinos because their ancestors came in the wrong wave of migration. But never a word about their 350-year resistance to foreign aggression. (Scott “The Igorot Struggle for Independence,” 13)

² The term “Igorot” is an appellation commonly used to refer to the ethnolinguistic groups that originated in what is now administratively called Cordillera Administrative Region situated in Northern Luzon of the Philippines. The ethnolinguistic groups that are identified as Igorot are the Kankana-ey, the Ibaloy, the Isneg, the Tinguian, the Kalinga, the Ifugao and the Bontok who are also often designated to come from clearly delineated areas. These ethnolinguistic groups speak languages that are distinct from each other as well as hold certain cultural beliefs and practices that enable them to distinguish themselves from one another. However, their shared experience of not being completely colonized by the Spanish as well as being patronized by their American colonizers allowed them to create a shared identity that can be encapsulated by the term Igorot (Finin). Furthermore, these groups are able to interact with each other through the lingua franca Ilokano, which is the language of a major ethnolinguistic group in the Philippines also called Ilokano and is the third most spoken native language in the Philippines because of its function as lingua franca particularly in Northern Luzon. Many Filipinos who are not well-versed in the distinctions between these specific ethnolinguistic groups often refer to them by this term. Igorot is believed to mean “from the mountains” (Scott, *The Discovery of the Igorots*).

³ In the Ibaloy folktale “The Giant and the Dwarf,” the giant called Abadugan (in Ibaloy meaning “the biggest”) is a scourge who compels villages to give him all their food, otherwise he would eat their children. Once he has eaten all the food in one village, he would move to the next. One day, Abadugan arrives at another village called Papa where a dwarf known as Kaotekan (meaning “the smallest”) lives. Kaotekan defeats Abadugan by changing into a number of animals, thwarting all of Abadugan’s attacks. Abadugan eventually falls down a cliff and turns into a large rock (Lumbera and Lumbera 32).

⁴ The attribution of the quote to Mark Twain is erroneous. The quote belongs to the first two lines of the first and last stanzas of Rudyard Kipling’s “The Ballad of East and West.” The two lines are also taken out of context:

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho’ they come from the ends of the earth!*

“The Ballad of the East and the West,” first published in 1889, tells the story of a colonel’s son who tirelessly pursues Kamal, a native outlaw who stole the “Colonel’s horse.” The colonel’s son shows bravery in continuing to pursue Kamal deep into his territory where Kamal could easily order his own men to kill him. In the aftermath of their showdown, they realize that they are equal, growing to respect each other and exchanging gifts. Kamal eventually sends his own son to join the colonel’s son’s “troop of guides,” thus becoming his comrade. In its entirety, the context of the ballad tells of the possibility of equality despite preconceived insurmountable differences.

⁵ When Abby goes to Baguio in pursuit of her best friend, she only has a taped recording to guide her. Vince's name is written on the tape as well as the bar where he sings. When Abby finds him, he tells her that it was his friend who had asked him to make the recording. Abby convinces him to bring her to where their friends might be. They first travel to Banaue, Ifugao, one of the six provinces of the Cordillera Administrative Region. Their friends aren't there, so they travel next to Sagada, Mountain Province, another province of the Cordillera where Vince's friend has another house. The shortest distance between Banaue and Sagada is 83.3 kilometers or at least four (4) hours by car. The distance between Baguio and Banaue is 221 kilometers or at least seven (7) hours by car.

⁶ Abby's particular words to her friend were: "You can't live here. I know you so well. *Masyado kang maarte para sa lugar na ito!*" (You're too sophisticated/particular for a place like this!)

⁷ Derived from the Spanish phrase *alta sociedad*, *alta sosyal* is also used in the Philippines to mean high society. In Philippine soap operas, the stories and lifestyle of the *alta sosyal* are commonly depicted and contrasted against a poor central character. Often, the *alta sosyal* characters are used as the representation of society that impedes the happiness and success of the protagonists.

⁸ The dialogue in *Forevermore* is primarily in Filipino and a mixture of English, with a few Ilokano lines and phrases sometimes spoken by the people in the La Presa community to signify their ethnic belonging. The specific dialogue where this line came from is in Filipino with a few phrases in English. Translations are mine.

⁹ In episode 29, Xander's specific lines were, "Siguraduhin mo lang na tutuparin mo iyang 'yes' mo. Hindi sa isang tawag ng mga taga-bundok na iyan ay bubuwagin mo." (Trans: "Better make sure that you keep your promise. Not to break it with just one call from those mountain-dwellers.")

¹⁰ Xander's ex-girlfriend wants to get back with Xander even though he is evidently in love with Agnes. Her father, a prominent politician, coerces Xander to give in to his daughter's wishes by illegally claiming the La Presans' land and trying to evict them as well as doing a hostile take-over of the Grande Hotels owned by Xander's family.

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